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General Assembly

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Official Records

39th plenary meeting
Friday, 20 October 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 108 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(b) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256/Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.5)

(c) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(d) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.4)

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(f) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(g) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(h) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(i) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(j) Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.7)

(k) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.6)

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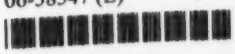

(l) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256/Add.1)

(m) Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(n) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/185)

(o) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(p) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(q) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(r) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

(s) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/184)

(t) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256)

Mr. Uras (Turkey): Turkey strongly believes that the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations contributes to the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. In that context, we welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/61/256 and Add.1) on agenda item 108, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations".

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization was established in 1992, at a time when the world in general and Europe in particular were being shaken by great political changes. It was founded as a unique and promising model of a multilateral economic initiative aimed at fostering interaction and harmony among member States, as well as at ensuring peace, stability and prosperity by encouraging friendly and good-neighbourly relations in the Black Sea region. Since then it has developed into a full-fledged international organization, with its charter entering into force in 1999. Turkey, as the host country of its headquarters, is pleased to note that, during the 14 years of its existence, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization has, in its own way, been instrumental in contributing to efforts to increase stability in the region through expanded economic cooperation.

The geographic area covered by the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization encompasses the territories of the Black Sea littoral States, the Balkans and the Caucasus, comprising an area of nearly 20 million square kilometres. It represents a region of some 350 million people, with a foreign trade capacity of over $300 billion annually. After the Persian Gulf region, it is the second-largest source of oil and natural gas, along with its rich proven reserves of minerals and metals. It is rapidly becoming Europe's major transport and energy-transfer corridor.

Even though it covers a complicated geographical and geostrategic area — with its well established legal, institutional and procedural framework — the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organization sets the pace for cooperation among its members. Following the mandate given to the organization by its summit in 2002, it has expanded its activities beyond the traditional areas of regional economic cooperation. With its new mechanisms and instruments, such as the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank and the Project Development Fund, the organization has been supporting significant progress in such areas of cooperation as trade, banking and finance, transport, energy and electricity networks, science, statistical data, combating organized crime and simplification of cross-border and customs procedures.

We support the Secretary-General's recommendations set out in the report contained in document A/61/256, regarding the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. We share the view that the United Nations, the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system should continue to cooperate and hold consultations with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and formulate and implement joint programmes pertaining to fields of common interest, including the implementation of cooperative agreements.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, also requires enhanced cooperation and results-oriented collaboration between international and regional organizations. With that understanding in mind, Turkey has advocated the deepening of the relations between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the United Nations system, as well as with other relevant international and regional organizations, particularly international financial institutions. We firmly believe that further cooperation with the United Nations will undoubtedly help the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization to reach its goals.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): I would like to begin by associating Solomon Islands with the statement delivered by the representative of Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum group of States. I would like to take this opportunity to make some general remarks in my national capacity in connection with sub-item (r) of agenda item 108, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum".

Solomon Islands welcomes the Secretary General's report (A/61/256 and Add.1) on the opportunities and challenges of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and intergovernmental organizations. It gives us the opportunity to review and reflect on the health of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, as well as to consider ways and means to further strengthen interaction between intergovernmental entities.

Solomon Islands is equally pleased to note that six high-level meetings have been convened since 1994. That satisfies Article 54 of the Charter of the United Nations and translates into action the 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, which supposedly gave birth to regional and global partnership.

Solomon Islands is a country made up of numerous islands. As a small island developing State, we have found strength through cooperation, both as a necessity and as a means of doing more for our people. We look to all forms of cooperation for solutions — at the subregional, regional and international levels. Solomon Islands feels that cooperation between the United Nations and regional intergovernmental organizations has made great strides in a number of areas.

However, more needs to be done. I say that against the background that the five members of the Pacific Islands Forum are classified as least developed countries. My own country is emerging from a conflict situation which took place six years ago. The subregion has been identified by the United Nations as being off track in terms of meeting its Millennium Development Goals. Recently the Asian Development Bank made the same assessment.

The 2005 Millennium Summit Outcome document provides an excellent basis for United Nations and regional intergovernmental organizations to define their cooperation. The Summit document emphasized development as a means on maintaining international and regional peace.

In examining chapter XII of the Secretary-General's report, which deals with United Nations cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum, Solomon Islands notes, and remains thankful for, the role of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville, the United Nations Development Programme and the Pacific Islands Forum mission to observe April's elections in Solomon Islands. We are also grateful to the United Nations Development Fund for Women's various programmes, as well as for the UNESCO programme in our country regarding the development of media in conflict areas.

However, my delegation is concerned that cooperation between the United Nations and our regional organization tend to be on the latter chapter of the Summit Outcome document. There is more focus on governance and security issues, with almost nothing on development. Unfortunately, this trend, if not arrested, will bring insecurity, both regionally and globally, since we all operate in an interdependent, international system.

The Pacific Plan referred to in the report of the Secretary-General is based on four pillars, namely, economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. The first two pillars have not received due attention in current cooperative arrangements. I would like to name a few of the current cooperative arrangements mentioned in the report. These include the workshop on peacebuilding and conflict prevention, the workshop on building capacity to implement Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, the workshop on ethics and accountability, the leadership programme with the University of the South Pacific, regional training for trainers for local elected leaders, a peer review of Pacific Island Forum counter-terrorism and transnational organized crime legislation, among others.

Solomon Islands appreciates these workshop and training opportunities, but we must move forward with the development challenges of our time. Solomon Islands has placed development high on its agenda here at the United Nations; hence, we would like to see outcomes of the United Nations high-level meeting and Millennium Summit processes mirror the Organization's cooperative arrangements with regional organizations. In this regard, my delegation would like to see the Brussels Programme of Action given the same level of attention as the Millennium Development Goals.

At the regional level, renewable energy and telecommunications are some of the sectors where cooperation could be enhanced and explored. These are some areas where we have regional polices, although we do not have the resources to nationalize and localize them. These are development challenges where South-South cooperation could be initiated with United Nations assistance.

Trade is another area that needs support. Despite regional trading arrangements, there is little trade happening between the Pacific Islands countries, given the fact that we all are producing similar products. With food security programmes of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, we could reduce food imports and spend more on our commitments to the MDGs.

Cooperation in the Pacific region is of great strength and breadth. As a recipient country of regional cooperation arrangements, through the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), Solomon Islands has seen its national challenges addressed regionally over the past three years. The RAMSI arrangement is a comprehensive package that has various elements of peacebuilding, peacekeeping and nation-building, all rolled into one. Solomon Islands remains committed to this arrangement and would like to see the partnership reviewed in an effort to have it more development-focused. My delegation takes this opportunity to thank Australia, New Zealand and all of our Pacific neighbours for their support and contributions.

Finally, I wish to assure you, Madam President, of Solomon Islands' commitment to making our Organization an effective international tool for cooperation. We acknowledge that the upgrading of the United Nations presence in Solomon Islands through the United Nations Development Programme will further enhance cooperation between the United Nations, Solomon Islands and the region as a whole.

Mr. Korga (Togo) (*spoke in French*): I would like, once again, to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/61/256), which, inter alia, reports on activities conducted by the United Nations in its relations with the African Union (AU).

Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union goes back to the first days of our independence. Based on the Charter, cooperation between two organizations, which are committed to the same ideals and pursue the same objectives, has enabled them to pool their efforts in order to work effectively to safeguard and consolidate peace and stability and to ensure economic and social progress on our continent.

In the report under consideration, the Secretary-General emphasizes the importance that the United Nations attaches to such cooperation, which has grown stronger over the years. The contribution of the United Nations to the transformation of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) into the African Union and to the establishment of its institutions, the creation of an Office of the Special Adviser for Africa, the participation of the United Nations in the formulation of the strategic framework for the African Union and the decisive part it took in mobilizing international efforts for the New Partnership for Africa's

Development (NEPAD) are all eloquent illustrations of this, and Togo can only welcome it.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union today deals with a broad range of issues — peacekeeping operations, strengthening African capacity in this area and close cooperation in the sphere of disarmament — and these have always been at the core of our relationship.

With regard more specifically to disarmament, a special concern for my delegation, I would like to recall that in resolution 40/151 G of 16 December 1985, the General Assembly decided, within the framework of the Secretariat, to create the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa on the basis of existing resources and voluntary contributions that Member States might make to that end. The establishment of the Regional Centre was in response to an urgent need to promote the objectives of peace, disarmament and development in Africa. Since that time, this institution in Lomé, acting in cooperation with States and regional and subregional organizations of the continent, has conducted activities that have made a great contribution to the quest for solutions, to challenges facing our countries, especially in the area of combating illicit trafficking and the proliferation and circulation of small arms and light weapons, all of which are factors that destabilize our States.

We, as sons of our continent, realize the special importance for our countries in the Lomé Centre, since we know that every day unprecedented threats to the free world are becoming clearer. It is strange to say, but it is precisely in this context of uncertainty that the Regional Centre seems to have been abandoned to its own devices, with serious and recurrent material and financial problems, which are a real risk and hinder the accomplishment of its mission for peace and stability in Africa.

Referring to the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/137), we note that during the period from July 2005 to July 2006, enormous uncertainty has continued to threaten the functioning of the Regional Centre, because of the constant reduction in voluntary contributions in support of its activities.

My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for establishing a consultative mechanism for the re-organization of the Lomé Centre in order to explore ways and means that could help to put things in proper perspective. We look forward eagerly to the conclusions and recommendations of this group, which should, logically, provide guidance to the international community on the need to revitalize the functioning of the Centre by allocating sufficient human, financial and material resources to it.

As I have just emphasized, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa has been experiencing material difficulties, in particular because of the sharp decline in voluntary contributions to its Trust Fund. In spite of the situation, this institution has attempted, as best it could, to implement its work programmes in the major areas defined in its mandate, inter alia, peace and security, arms control and disarmament and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, as well as civil society.

Togo, for its part, and pursuant to the host country agreement signed with the United Nations, extends and will continue to extend its full support to the Lomé Centre. Thus, in addition to its voluntary contribution, Togo grants material and logistical benefits covering the rent for the building and for the residence of the Director, and for electricity, water and telephone usage. The total cost of those allocations amounts to approximately $40,000 per year.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa is a manifestation of the determination of the international community. We cannot hide indefinitely behind resolution 40/151 G — which, by the way, gives rise to different interpretations — to leave the Centre without resources. At a time when that institution is preparing to commemorate its twentieth anniversary, the international community should reaffirm the relevance of its mandate. Member States should give serious thought to the possibility of a United Nations budgetary contribution to its functioning. That is why my delegation places a great deal of hope in the consultative mechanism that the Secretary-General has recommended for renewal. We have confidence in it, given what is at stake, so that its work leads — as I said a moment ago — to specific recommendations likely to bring about a definitive solution to the Centre's current situation and to enable it to carry out its mandate in the service of peace and disarmament in Africa.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): The African Union (AU) is now a dynamic organization, spearheading the development of Africa under well-defined structures. Among them are the Peace and Security Council and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Under the Peace and Security Council, issues of peace and security are being tackled systematically. Africa has realized that it should take ownership of security issues. It pioneered the concept of intervention in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and declared categorically that sovereignty cannot be invoked to protect those crimes. World leaders gathered in New York in September 2005 echoed this, reflecting it in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1).

In order to fulfil its mandate in security matters, the African Union needs to work closely with the United Nations. The two organizations should play complementary roles. They need each other to promote international peace and security on the African continent. Without abdicating its primary responsibility under the Charter for maintaining peace and security, the United Nations, through the Security Council, can, acting under Chapter VIII of the Charter, delegate some of its functions to the African Union on the principle of subsidiarity. The African Union is better placed to handle some of the conflicts, using its well-established structures and local knowledge.

The Economic Community of West African States has been able to handle conflict situations in the west, and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has made remarkable achievements when a comprehensive peace agreement was signed between the Government of the Sudan and the Southern Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement. In Burundi, under the regional initiative chaired by Uganda, peace has been achieved at last. The AU peace contingent in Darfur is courageously trying to maintain peace and security under difficult circumstances, though it lacks financial resources to carry out its mandate. The United Nations, working with the African Union, can devise a proper mechanism to achieve peace in Darfur. In the case of Somalia, we call on the Security Council to lift the arms embargo partially to enable IGAD to deploy forces in Somalia to stabilize the transitional Government.

On the economic front, the African Union, under NEPAD, is tackling the issue of development. The United Nations, through the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Economic and Social Council, should continue to extend a hand to these efforts. The Peacebuilding Commission should also work closely with appropriate AU mechanisms to address issues of post-conflict development and rehabilitation.

Another area of cooperation between the two organizations is migration and development. Remittances from migrant workers are becoming an important source of financial resources for the African continent. Uganda hails the historic recent High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held in New York on 14 and 15 September 2006, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/227 of 23 December 2005. A follow-up dialogue should be held in the near future with the AU accorded a prominent role in its organization and work, given the fact that historically, from the days of infamous slave trade to the present day, immigrants from the African continent have played a significant role in the development not only of the world economy but also the economies of African countries.

In order to further strengthen cooperation between African Union and United Nations, there should be regular informal discussions or dialogue between the two organizations. For instance, the AU Peace and Security Council could hold informal sessions with the Security Council at agreed-upon intervals.

Mr. Snoussi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): My delegation attaches major importance to our debate today on cooperation between the United Nations and the regional and other organizations. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for the information he has provided on this subject.

Regional cooperation, whose structure and scope has become increasingly multidimensional and integrated, constitutes more than ever an instrument that complements the activities of the United Nations and the evolution of multilateralism. Developments on the international scene show well the links of synergy and interaction between the universality of the United Nations and the regional dimension. That is where the goal of full cooperation between the United Nations and the regional organizations takes on its importance and pertinence.

It is known that the regional organizations play a central role in world governance and thus should be

integrated as full partners to the work of the United Nations. The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document stressed the importance of measures to reinforce cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations and recommended that such measures be identified and adopted.

As a member of a number of regional organizations, Tunisia believes that the report of the Secretary-General shows a real will on the part of the United Nations to strengthen, in various fields, its cooperation with these regional organizations. We welcome this development. It is an effort that should be recognized as this effort would achieve more success if further supported and better targeted.

The cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States, whose vitality and solidity we acknowledge, covers a number of fields and levels, particularly as concerns peace, stability and security. The 2005 Cairo meeting on financing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the 2006 Vienna general meeting on the joint evaluation of achievements in the economic and social fields also shows this concern with strengthening the scope and foundations of cooperation.

In the economic and social sphere, my delegation welcomes the progress achieved and hopes for cooperation between the United Nations system and the League of Arab States. The League's structures should be better coordinated and receive greater support, particularly in terms of financial and operational resources. We also recommend the establishment on a regular and predictable basis of greater coordination and evaluation.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate its appeal for better cooperation with the African Union and its institutions, particularly since Africa enjoys priority on the agenda of the United Nations and that of the international community, in the light of its special needs and challenges. The African Union, which has proven its effectiveness when it has received support, does not have sufficient resources to confront all situations. Hence the needs for the United Nations and the international community to further enhance its support.

I would like to stress the role of the African Union, notably its Peace and Security Council, a structure that should be strengthened at the material, political, judicial and institutional levels. In this context, better-structured cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations is required in order to contribute to the establishment of an improved African capacity for conflict prevention and the maintenance and consolidation of peace. Without a commitment from all partners of Africa and the African Union, particularly the United Nations, the ambitious objective of Horizon 2010 — an Africa without conflict — will be a difficult achievement.

Before concluding on this point, I would like to express the respect and admiration of the Tunisian delegation for the efforts made by the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General for Africa, whose job, inter alia, is to deal with the relationship between the United Nations and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and whose office deserves to be further reinforced. In this context, the United Nations and the international community strengthen national and regional capabilities to help implement NEPAD, which is a comprehensive, integrated programme for development for Africa and a base of cooperation for its partners.

My delegation takes note with satisfaction of the continuing cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on many important economic, political, social and humanitarian questions. As voice of the Muslim world, the OIC and its institutions are deployed in many fields and with many partners to contribute to the efforts of the international community in the service of development, peace and security. My delegation believes that, bearing in mind the importance of the Muslim world on the international scene and its capabilities to serve humanity's objectives, the consolidation of cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC would provide greater means to achieve our common objectives.

In conclusion, the general debate of this session of the General Assembly is taking place under the theme of "Implementing a Global Partnership for Development." My delegation is convinced that a strengthened partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations is one of the pillars of this world partnership.

Finally, my delegation hopes that the Secretary-General, in his next report, would formulate recommendations and action plans and not confine

himself solely to a description of the activities of cooperation that have already been achieved.

Mr. Capelle (Marshall Islands): The Republic of Marshall Islands wishes to align itself with the statement made by Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum group, based in New York, urging the General Assembly to continue to strengthen the relationship between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).

Member States of the Forum, including the Marshall Islands, are often challenged by their remote geographic location, small size or exposure to natural hazards. In addition, many Forum members, such as the Marshall Islands, are uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise and climate change. Citizens of certain PIF member States risk becoming the world's first environmental refugees. The remote geography of many PIF nations also creates hurdles which interfere with economic development, education and poverty reduction. Certain Forum nations, in particular the Marshall Islands, continue to struggle with the devastating environmental, social and public health impacts of nuclear weapons testing. Regional coordination is critical in meeting th::se challenges.

The Pacific Islands Forum provides a comprehensive regional strategy to counter these pressing challenges by linking the regional framework of regional universities, technical organizations and national Governments with development and environmental agencies. Global development and security goals are defined within the unique regional and cultural character of Forum member States.

Member States of the Forum are also a truly global asset. Forum States, including the Marshall Islands, feature some of the world's greatest biological and cultural diversity. Nations of the Forum serve as gatekeepers and stewards for much of the world's marine biodiversity. Their citizens speak over 1,200 distinct languages and proudly maintain unique cultural traditions tied to island geography and environment. Increasing United Nations cooperation with the Forum will help ensure a more unified and balanced approach within the region to enhance, rather than diminish, these invaluable resources.

The Forum plays an integral role in the development and implementation of the Pacific Plan, a far-reaching regional strategy that advances sustainable development, economic growth, sound governance and security. Ongoing coordination with the United Nations has already yielded positive results, including collaborative efforts of the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies with the Forum to ensure close coordination of the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Pacific Plan. In addition, workshops, policy studies and demonstration projects sponsored by the United Nations have enhanced regional understanding of conflict prevention, ethical elections, gender issues, communication technology and poverty reduction.

Noting the importance of the United Nations cooperative relationship with the Forum, we urge the General Assembly to continue to build a stronger alliance with our group. Within the immediate future, Forum members will wrestle with increasingly complex economic, environmental and political questions.

Too often, international development and reform efforts have lacked a coherent regional focus or have failed to define solutions within the context of traditional local culture. By utilizing the regional expertise of the Forum, the General Assembly will ensure that the implementation of international policy will become a successful reality. The establishment of a stronger physical United Nations presence — including programme staff or development offices — within Forum nations that have expressed the need for such a presence would greatly advance the meaningful realization of the partnership between the United Nations and the Forum.

The United Nations has before it a valuable opportunity to place key global issues — such as climate change, sustainable development, poverty reduction, and ethical governance — within the context of the improved regional coordination of the Pacific Island's Forum.

Mr. Zewdie (Ethiopia): My delegation is taking the floor to express its views on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations. In that regard, I intend to comment briefly on sub-item (a) of agenda item 108, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union", which is well addressed in the reports of the Secretary-General contained in documents A/61/256 and A/61/204.

It is a stated objective of the African Union to encourage international cooperation in light of the Charter of the United Nations with a view to promoting peace, security and stability on the continent. The African Union is making great strides in attaining that stated objective. It is cooperating with the United Nations and other organizations so that Africa can achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the programmes of the New Partnership for Africa's Development can be implemented, the continent can become free of conflicts and other desired goals can be achieved.

Notwithstanding those positive developments, Africa is facing immense challenges, which the continent cannot confront alone. In that regard, it is worth mentioning that half of the world's conflicts and peacekeeping efforts are in Africa and that sub-Saharan Africa remains behind other regions in achieving the MDGs. Therefore, it has become extremely important that the United Nations give priority to Africa. That is also the main reason why cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union has become more imperative today than ever before.

There are instances in which the African Union and subregional organizations are well placed to resolve conflicts. There are also situations in which the United Nations peacekeeping mechanism must become more efficient. However, when the situation demands it, cooperation between the Union and the United Nations produces a better result at lower cost, and united action should come to the fore.

The importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations has been more recognized by the international community during the current decade than at any time before. As a result, during the 2005 World Summit our heads of State and Government called for a number of measures to strengthen such cooperation. In particular, the Summit emphasized cooperation with the African Union and forged a 10-year capacity-building plan. In that regard, my delegation encourages increased assistance to the African Union in the area of peacekeeping operations in general and strengthening the African standby force in particular.

My delegation noted a number of positive recommendations cited in the report, aimed at further strengthening the cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations and making it more fruitful. In that regard, my delegation especially supports the recommendations aimed at strengthening the Union's capacities in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.

Mr. Cho Hyun (Republic of Korea): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/61/256 and Add.1), which informs us of many significant developments during the past two years in the cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations. That is an issue to which the Republic of Korea attaches great importance.

Global issues such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, development, climate change and environmental degradation are universal, but they affect different geographical regions in distinct ways. Accordingly, regional organizations are often well suited to offer region-specific remedies and approaches that can reinforce global efforts to address those issues. In that regard, the United Nations should continue to strengthen its cooperation with regional and other organizations. A holistic approach, encompassing both global and regional perspectives, is vital if we are to fully address the many issues of common concern.

I would now like to draw the Assembly's attention to the regional organizations and arrangements in East Asia. As a full dialogue partner of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a member of ASEAN+3 and the East Asian Summit, the Republic of Korea welcomes increased interaction between the United Nations and ASEAN. The second ASEAN-United Nations summit, held here in New York in September last year, was a good example of close cooperation between those two institutions. The Republic of Korea expects the summit to develop into a regular channel for discussing the common concerns of ASEAN and the United Nations.

Moreover, I would like to note that the regional seminars held since 2001 — including the fifth ASEAN-United Nations regional seminar on conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, held in South-East Asia in May this year — have been especially valuable in enhancing mutual understanding. Likewise, we warmly welcome ASEAN's decision to request observer status at the United Nations during this session of the General Assembly.

The Republic of Korea also stresses the importance of the partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. The ASEAN-UNDP partnership aims to narrow the development gap within ASEAN countries and between ASEAN's region and other regions, as well as to integrate ASEAN more broadly into other multilateral organizations such as the World Trade Organization. We support this valuable partnership and expect its continued development.

A related ASEAN initiative that is worthy of note is the ASEAN Regional Forum, an important facilitator of political and security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. We see great potential for closer cooperation between the Forum and United Nations, not least in the fields of preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding. We hope to see the Forum working in partnership with the United Nations to build its capacity for coordinating inter-Asian security matters.

Yet another organization of importance to the Republic of Korea is the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The IPU has been an essential link between the citizens of the world, as represented by their parliamentarians, and the United Nations. Moreover, each national parliament plays a vital role as the primary institution responsible for adapting and translating global norms and agreements into domestic laws. In this regard, my delegation strongly supports increased cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations. Likewise, we reaffirm our support for IPU efforts to provide greater parliamentary contributions to the United Nations.

In closing, my delegation reiterates the importance of interaction and close partnership between the United Nations and regional and other international organizations, with a view to reinforcing each other's capacities and achieving synergistic outcomes.

Mrs. Asif (Pakistan): The Pakistan delegation is pleased to participate in the discussion on this very important agenda item. In today's ever-changing world, this agenda item has taken on great importance and remains the focal point of action in many key areas, including peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Indeed, one cannot overstate the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in strengthening peace, security and stability.

Regional and other organizations play a key role in various parts of our world. Recent decades have seen a marked increase in the number of regional organizations, and indeed in the way in which they have grown and transformed over time to take on more responsibilities and greater roles. As the only organization with universal membership, substantial funding, significant capacity and expertise, the United Nations has what is termed in economics a natural monopoly over other organizations.

However, the work of regional, subregional and other organizations cannot be relegated to a secondary or a subsidiary status. These organizations have their own strengths. In fact, every regional and other organization has evolved a niche of its own and offers valuable specialization in many key areas of concern to its member countries. With a focused regional approach, they are likely to come up with important and innovative ideas to find the most appropriate framework for tackling the issues. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations, thus, is imperative. This cooperation should seek to capitalize on the specialization of each organization and, ideally, should be complementary, not competitive.

The Pakistan delegation would like to thank and commend the Secretary-General for his report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations (A/61/256 and Add.1), and for his initiative in promoting such cooperation over the years.

Pakistan is pleased to note the progress achieved during the past year by the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in promoting their shared goals of international peace and security and development. We welcome the effective contacts and consultations that the two organizations have maintained over the past several years.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference, one of the largest intergovernmental organizations, is the collective voice of the Muslim world, spread across three continents. The OIC has been engaged over the years in a constructive and cooperative relationship with the United Nations, reinforcing common efforts in pursuit of peace, development and security. The OIC has endeavoured to promote better understanding and

dialogue between and among different civilizations and cultures. It has taken significant measures in fostering peace, in promoting social and economic development, in combating ethnic or racial intolerance and in seeking an end to the causes of injustice and instability, which are a constant threat to world peace and security.

We would like to take this opportunity to recall the joint statement issued by the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, the OIC and the League of Arab States, together with the representatives of Qatar, Spain and Turkey, which appealed for calm after the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed and which also contained a commitment to formulate a joint strategy and agreed measures that would help overcome the crisis, prevent a recurrence and promote tolerance and mutual respect among all religions and communities in Europe and elsewhere. Pakistan firmly believes that there is a lot of work still left to be done in this context and the United Nations and the OIC need to continue to examine ways and means of further expanding and diversifying their cooperation on this issue. Concerted effort and outside-the-box thinking is required to identify new and innovative ways to tackle this issue, which has the potential to cause unnecessary ill will and misunderstanding.

We also welcome the general meeting on cooperation between the representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations system and the OIC and its specialized institutions in July 2006. However, we would like to encourage the regularization of this trend, with at least one annual general meeting. Both organizations will be able to accrue positive operational benefits from such cooperation and coordination.

We would also like to see the two organizations work more closely in addressing and resolving some of the conflicts in the Muslim world, including the conflicts in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kashmir. More work needs to be done by all concerned to address the root causes of these conflicts and to promote justice and peace.

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is another major regional cooperation organization seeking to promote socio-economic development of its member States on the basis of their common needs. The ECO has played an important role in strengthening and promoting multidimensional regional economic cooperation among its member countries. It has identified four priority areas for intense regional cooperation, namely trade, transport, communications and energy.

The ECO region has a population of nearly 350 million people, immense natural resources and a membership with the political will to tap these resources for the mutual advantage of all. The ECO can serve not only as a vehicle for the post-war reconstruction of Afghanistan but also for developing and integrating the economies of the region which have borne the brunt of the conflict in Afghanistan.

The ECO already has in place the blueprints for the region-wide development of transport and communications infrastructure, facilities for trade and investment, banking and insurance, culture and education, and effective use of the region's vast energy resources. We expect the United Nations system and the international community to support the efforts of the ECO and its member States in order to realize these blueprints, not only for the benefit of the region, but also for the greater global community.

Another dynamic regional organization of which Pakistan is a member is the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which represents the seven countries of South Asia — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The organization was launched at the first-ever summit meeting of South Asian heads of State or Government, held in Dhaka in December 1985.

SAARC's objectives are to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life by accelerating economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through mutual cooperation. SAARC also aims at strengthening cooperation with other developing countries and with international and regional organizations with similar aims and objectives. As is the case with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the ECO, United Nations cooperation with SAARC could be mutually beneficial.

To conclude, I would like to express our hope and confidence that the cooperation of the United Nations with both the OIC and the ECO will continue to flourish to the mutual benefit of the three organizations. We also hope that a new chapter will soon begin in the cooperation between the United Nations and SAARC. As an active member of the United Nations, the OIC, the ECO and SAARC,

Pakistan will remain actively involved in the work of all these organizations and pursue policies and strategies that would help enhance coordination and cooperation and, ideally, at the same time, identify and eliminate areas of wasteful overlap.

Mr. Kodera (Japan): Allow me to take this opportunity to comment on the state of cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO). My delegation would like to commend the President of the organization's forty-fifth session, Ambassador Narinder Singh, and the Government of India for successfully hosting the very fruitful golden jubilee session in New Delhi last April, as well as for taking on the role of Chair of the session.

AALCO is a truly unique regional organization, which promotes international legal cooperation, develops and disseminates expertise in international law by organizing annual meetings, seminars and workshops in international law under consideration in various forums of the United Nations and other bodies, and contributes to the process of codification and development of international law. Japan is confident that the work of codification in particular will be greatly advanced by strengthening the interaction between AALCO and the United Nations.

I would like now to briefly touch upon the state of cooperation between the United Nations and other organizations. We believe that in addressing regional issues, it is essential to ensure that the countries in the region and their regional organizations take ownership of the issues they face. We are happy to note that such ownership has been demonstrated, for example, by the African Union and the African subregional organizations in the course of their efforts to address regional conflicts in recent years.

Japan attaches particularly high value to the role that the African Union has been playing in Darfur, the Sudan. We also commend the efforts made by sub-regional organizations such as the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States in addressing peacekeeping issues. We believe that the assistance of the international community and the United Nations will be more effective if it is provided on the basis of ownership by the region and if it is better coordinated with the organizations from the region concerned.

Japan, for its part, has provided various forms of assistance to promote the capacity-building efforts of the African Union and sub-regional organizations, and will continue to do so. We are convinced that capacity-building by regional organizations will enhance the role those organizations play in the maintenance of international peace and security both in general and within all the regions of the world.

Finally, let me say a few words about the draft resolution contained in document A/61/L.6, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", which was introduced by the representative of Italy at this morning's meeting.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), consisting of parliaments of the majority of Member States, is the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue. The IPU, through its wide-ranging activities, has contributed significantly to promoting democracy and enhancing awareness in the general public of the role of the United Nations. As a sponsor of this draft resolution, Japan hopes that the IPU will continue to play the important and unique role it has played until now. Since relations between the United Nations and the IPU are at a critical juncture, my delegation also believes that, as called for in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit, Member States should work for

> "strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and national and regional parliaments, in particular through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with a view to furthering all aspects of the Millennium Declaration in all fields of the work of the United Nations and ensuring the effective implementation of United Nations reform". (resolution 60/1, para. 171).

Mr. Kruljevic (Serbia): It is with pleasure that I take this opportunity to address two specific questions under this agenda item, namely, the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

The issues that these organizations deal with are closely connected. They include the promotion of stability, the development of democracy and the rule of law, and the advancement and strengthening of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The mutual cooperation between these organizations, as well as

their cooperation with the United Nations, is of vital importance in facilitating the resolution of problems in certain regions and in some European States, all the more so since the maintenance of international peace and security requires a multidisciplinary approach and participation and the active contribution of many international institutions.

As a Member State of the United Nations, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, Serbia supports the cooperation among them. By their commitment to their goals and through their support of political, legal and institutional reforms, the OSCE and the Council of Europe make major contributions to the development of democracy. That is why it is necessary to encourage additional cooperation between these organizations and the United Nations.

The Republic of Serbia, as well as the Western Balkan region as a whole, is still burdened with a large number of refugees and internally displaced persons. In that respect, cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is of particular importance. In Kosovo and Metohija, in particular, human rights and humanitarian issues require adequate cooperation among international organizations.

The activities of the OSCE mission in the Republic of Serbia have been assessed as successful. The mission is a good example of a new model that no longer has the character of a post-conflict or fact-finding effort and is instead committed to strengthening reform processes and democracy in the host countries. The relationship between the OSCE mission in Serbia and the State institutions in the country is based on dialogue and cooperation with full exchange of information. We consider that this method of work should be maintained in order to ensure the success of activities undertaken and the fulfilment of the mission's mandate.

Following the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, the OSCE, together with other international organizations, played an important role in the process of confidence- and institution-building and in democratization by actively supporting the reform process initiated by the Governments of South-Eastern Europe. In addition, the OSCE is at the forefront of regional activities in border management, in line with the Ohrid Conference on Border Security and Management.

We are of the view that the work of OSCE missions in the region aimed at facilitating the return of refugees and expelled persons to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is very important. We believe that further expansion of cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE and its offices in the field will contribute to better minority protection, faster return of refugees and displaced persons and resolution of the issue of missing persons.

Within its partnership relationship with the Republic of Serbia, the OSCE has been active in many processes related to the promotion of democracy, rule of law, police reform, protection of human rights and rights of national minorities. The Republic of Serbia has all along emphasized the need for cooperation between the two OSCE missions in the Republic of Serbia, namely, the OSCE Mission in Belgrade and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMIK) in Pristina. The cooperation between these two missions was envisaged in Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). In the field, this cooperation is particularly important to resolving the problem of internally displaced and missing persons, the prevention of organized crime, the trade in arms, human beings and narcotic drugs, and international terrorism.

As far as the United Nations and the Council of Europe are concerned, we are convinced that further promotion of their cooperation in its various forms, will contribute, among other things, to reducing duplication of activities and more appropriate use of expert resources. Thus, the two Organizations will be even better able to satisfy the needs of host countries.

Joint United Nations and Council of Europe activities in the field of restoring and protecting the cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija are also of particular importance, especially in view of the establishment of the Independent International Commission for Cultural Heritage in Kosovo, a joint endeavour of the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

The third Council of Europe summit in Warsaw in May 2005 emphasized the importance of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals and the present-day challenges such as terrorism and various forms of crime, point to the need

for intensive cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, as well as with other regional organizations. However, it is necessary to clearly define their roles and use each to its best complementary advantage.

The Republic of Serbia will be the chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from May through November 2007. In that period, the Republic of Serbia will seek to encourage even more cooperation between the Council of Europe and other international organizations, and the United Nations, in particular.

In November of this year, the Republic of Serbia will also assume the chairmanship of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC). One of our priorities will be the strengthening of ties between the BSEC and other regional and international organizations and the United Nations specialized agencies. Our specific areas of focus will include the fight against crime, smuggling of human beings, drugs and arms, prevention of illegal migration, cooperation regarding natural and other disasters, environmental protection, education, energy, transport, tourism, the strengthening of cooperation among small- and medium-size enterprises, among others.

Since the activities of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation cover many converging and complementary issues, we are convinced that by strengthening the existing cooperation the organizations could provide additional assistance to my country and to countries of the region of South-Eastern Europe, particularly in the process of their accession to the Euro-Atlantic integration.

Mr. Cheok (Singapore): Since the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, ASEAN has had a fruitful and cooperative relationship with the United Nations, particularly through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). ASEAN nations have worked with the United Nations, both individually and collectively, on many issues, including capacity-building, health, disaster management, security and the Millennium Development Goals. We look forward to deepening this cooperation.

In recent years, both ASEAN and the United Nations have become more aware of the increasing problem of transboundary dangers. These dangers range from the threat of terrorism and nuclear proliferation to large-scale natural disasters, like the 26 December 2004 earthquake and tsunami, as well as possible pandemics such as avian flu. These are threats that individual countries and even regions cannot deal with effectively and comprehensively, and such transboundary dangers require close cooperation at the international level. For this, the United Nations remains the most effective partner.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At present, several ASEAN countries are suffering from "the haze", a severe form of air pollution caused by the illegal clearing of forests and vegetation by burning. Satellite pictures show that most of the hot spots are in parts of Sumatra and Kalimantan in Indonesia. This longstanding problem has escalated in the past decade. It respects no borders and affects several countries in South-East Asia, including Singapore. It has resulted in health problems for the affected populations, as well as adverse economic and social consequences. For example, 10 Indonesian airports have had to close recently because of visibility problems from the haze. Tourism has suffered in the region and day-to-day life for many people has been disrupted.

Over the last 10 years, ASEAN countries have worked together to try to solve this daunting problem. For instance, an ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution was signed in 2002, and almost all ASEAN States have ratified it. Recently, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono pledged that Indonesia would do so. This is a very encouraging move. We applaud Indonesia's commitment.

It is very heartening that Indonesia has acknowledged its responsibility and taken the lead to address this problem. Last week, Indonesia hosted a Sub-Regional Ministerial Meeting on Transboundary Haze Pollution — a very important initiative by President Yudhoyono. The meeting concluded that the haze problem has not been adequately addressed by the region and agreed to seek international expertise to develop a comprehensive plan of action with an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism.

This is in line with Singapore's view that it is critical to take action to prevent future fires. To do this, we should make use of all available resources. ASEAN

will require international assistance, including assistance from the United Nations. In this regard, we welcome Indonesian Environment Minister Rachmat Witoelar's statement following last week's meeting, where he said,

> "We are open to suggestions that will increase our effectiveness in suppressing current and future fires, and we welcome assistance from within and outside the region to overcome this dreadful problem which affects millions of lives".

This is a clarion call to which we hope the international community will respond. The long-standing channels of ASEAN-United Nations cooperation would be an effective and appropriate route to establish and channel assistance. Singapore will also do its part.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): Cooperation with regional organizations in developing and implementing various programmes and projects in almost all spheres of our lives — political, economic, social and cultural — has been a priority for Armenia. We believe that regional organizations create conducive frameworks for the development and advancement of relationships among its members and help to build confidence and trust through their cooperative mechanisms.

In this respect, I would like to touch briefly upon two of the organizations under discussion today: the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Armenia is cooperating with the Council of Europe in political and legal spheres. The year 2005 was a milestone for the fulfilment of our commitments with regard to our membership in that organization. A constitutional referendum on 27 November 2005 finalized the necessary changes in our constitution that would allow existing legislation to be brought into line with our Council of Europe commitments. At the beginning of 2006, the Government of Armenia undertook a two-year process of changing 67 laws, with the assistance of Council of Europe experts. Some of the laws that have already been revised include a law on the constitutional court, which now envisages the right of private citizens to file complaints with the Court, a law on police service, the criminal code and an Ombudsman law.

While complying with the requirements of the Council of Europe, Armenia went beyond the commitments undertaken with respect to its accession to Council of Europe Conventions and signed Protocol No. 13 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which deals with the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances.

To date, Armenia has signed and verified 49 Council of Europe conventions; another 11 are in the pipeline. We consider the improvement of Armenia's legislative framework through the Council of Europe conventions and the monitoring of their implementation to be an important area of cooperation with that organization, and we will strive to expand it.

A week ago, on 12 October, Armenia hosted the twenty-seventh Conference of Council of Europe Ministers of Justice on the role and rights of victims and assistance to them. Ministers from member and observer States, as well as representatives of international organizations, participated in the Conference.

In March 2006, the Council of Europe and the Republic of Armenia Programme of Action was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers; it outlines the priorities of our cooperation with that organization for 2006-2007.

Armenia attaches great importance to its cooperation with another major European organization — namely, the OSCE — in all its dimensions, including the human, political, environmental and economic aspects of security and stability. Currently, there are three large-scale projects under way, thanks to the assistance of the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

In May 2006, the cross-dimensional Mélange rocket fuel disposal project was launched in Armenia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, large stocks of Mélange rocket fuel were left on the territory of the Republic. These stockpiles posed both environmental and security dangers. If a leak were to occur, these highly toxic chemicals could contaminate the environment for decades to come. At the request of the Government of Armenia, the OSCE is helping to convert the rocket fuel into mineral-rich fertilizer, and we are thankful to the Governments of the United States, Germany, Finland and Canada for their financial and expert contributions that made this project possible.

The Police Assistance Programme is part of our cooperation with the OSCE office in Yerevan. It is designed to build trust between the police and society and to contribute to the development of a community-oriented policing model. The Programme supports the strengthening of a Police Training Centre for induction training and the implementation of a modern command and control system.

The opening of an OSCE Programme Implementation Office in the southern part of Armenia is a significant achievement, as it will boost the efforts for socio-economic development of the region. The OSCE Office has established two local public environmental centres there as well. It has also expanded its activities related to human rights protection, freedom of the media, labour migration, trafficking and money-laundering to include areas outside of the capital.

During recent years, both the Council of Europe and the OSCE have been instrumental in establishing democracy and the rule of law in Armenia. However, it is frustrating that the same organizations that are otherwise adamant with regard to human rights issues and open election procedures are astonishingly tolerant when it comes to the increased warmongering and militaristic rhetoric on the part of certain high-level officials in the region and the escalation of an arms race now under way in the conflict-torn region of the South Caucasus.

It is in this respect that Armenia considers the ongoing negotiation process within the OSCE Minsk Group for the resolution of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict to be a vital area of cooperation with the OSCE.

This involves a very competent group of negotiators who are extremely knowledgeable about the nitty-gritty of the conflict and the situation on the ground. The Group represents countries that have political, economic and geopolitical stakes in the region and have a true interest in achieving peace and stability by finding a lasting settlement to the conflict. The Group has contributed tremendously to the virtually uninterrupted dialogue between the parties and to the preservation of relative stability in the region through the monitoring of the ceasefire regime that has effectively been in place for over 12 years without a single peacekeeper on the ground. We are confident that these efforts, if uninterrupted and undiverted, could yield a positive outcome securing a durable and long-lasting solution to the Nagorny Karabakh conflict and bringing peace and stability to the region.

It is in the spirit of cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE that we believe that, to make the process effective and efficient, any discussion in the United Nations on the Nagorny Karabakh issue should be based on, and reflective of, the processes going on within the Minsk Group. However, during the past two years, under various pretexts, attempts have been made to divert the process of negotiations on Nagorny Karabakh by introducing agenda items, using procedural loopholes at the United Nations and exploiting certain sentiments of Member States. These efforts, which are aimed at creating a seemingly favourable milieu for predetermining the outcome of negotiations, focusing only on one component from the whole negotiation package, will only derail the peace process. Such a piecemeal approach to this conflict will at best postpone a final, lasting solution, but also may make a comprehensive agreement impossible and endanger the fragile relative stability established in the area. Moreover, further attempts in that direction will simply make it imperative to revise the current composition of the parties involved.

Mr. Labbé (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation will focus its statement on only one sub-item of this agenda item, sub-item 108 (k).

Chile is of the view that cooperation between the United Nations system and the Inter-Parliamentary Union is fundamental because it enables us to know the views and concerns of the legislative world with regard to the work of our Organization. This is particularly important with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security; economic and social development; the promotion and defence of human rights, including gender issues; humanitarian assistance; and the promotion of democracy, to mention only the most relevant issues. Multilateralism has a law-making dimension, whose realization often involves the adoption by legislatures of treaties and conventions and authorization to dispatch troops to peace operations; it always involves the budgetary authorization of the contributions that every State makes to the United Nations and other international organizations.

We want parliaments to be aware not only of what we do but also of our motivations and of the sensitive variables that go into multilateral diplomacy. Ongoing systemic contact with parliaments — as represented by their own world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union — will provide us with a two-way street for mutual communication, understanding and support. Furthermore, Chile believes that in areas of such importance as the promotion of democracy, human rights, human security, disarmament and the reform of the United Nations, we have to meet with our lawmakers and move ahead with them for the good of all.

For the important reasons I have mentioned, Chile congratulates the delegation of Italy for having submitted draft resolution A/61/L.6 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We have the honour of sponsoring that text, as orally revised by the representative of Italy. We are convinced that the draft resolution, which is perfectly in line with what is contained in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), will be the right tool to strengthen the links and cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It is in this spirit that the delegation of Chile urges the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution before us by consensus.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/2 of 13 October 1980, I now call on the observer for the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization.

Mr. Kamil (Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization): Allow me at the outset, being from the Arab Republic of Egypt, to say a few words in Arabic in honour of our sister, the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Then, I shall proceed in English, the official language of the organization that I lead, the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO).

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I am very pleased to address this unique Assembly, which is made up of delegations from the four corners of the Earth, forming an elite of ministers, ambassadors, diplomats, statesmen and politicians who have come with serious-mindedness to deal with the gamut of problems facing the international community and who spare no effort to find solutions to those problems. We take great pride in seeing Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa presiding over the sixty-first session of the General Assembly as the first Arab woman and the third woman in the history of the Organization to have been elected to the post of President. We extend to her our sincere congratulations on having earned the full confidence and trust that was placed in you. May her efforts be crowned with success, especially at this decisive, dangerous and sensitive turning point of history.

There are many vital substantive issues, some of which pose a threat to us as individuals and groups and to international peace and security; some of these have a direct impact on innocent civilians in various regions of the world. Those threats include terrorism in all its horrific forms, unprecedented violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and disregard and lack of respect for international law, international instruments and international humanitarian law. Nor must we ignore the perils that threaten groups and individuals in all regions because of the disgraceful widening gap in standards of social justice and between abject poverty and excessive wealth. Nor should we forget environmental disasters and their startling effects on the Earth's climate and agriculture, fostering desertification and floods, or their implications for development, the rights of peoples to control their own resources, the evil of corruption and other problems.

In spite of all of those problems, Madam President, we are certain that this international forum will, under your guidance, and thanks to your considerable experience, find solutions that will meet the expectations of all parties. We express once again our hope for the success of our work.

I will continue my statement in English, which is the official language of our organization.

(*spoke in English*)

The item on cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization is included in the General Assembly's agenda on a biennial basis, and although we participated as an observer at the sixtieth session, we were not accorded the opportunity to take the floor. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to convey our cordial greetings to the United Nations in connection with its sixtieth anniversary.

The wide-ranging reform measures set in motion by global political leaders at the 2005 Summit in the areas of development, peace, collective security, human rights, the rule of law and the strengthening of the United Nations were groundbreaking. An equally important achievement of the sixtieth session, which we welcome, was the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council.

On behalf of AALCO and on my own account, I express appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan and his staff for their continuous hard work and commitment. This being the last year of his second term in office, I would like, on behalf of AALCO and on my own account, to express to Mr. Kofi Annan our best wishes for all his future endeavours.

We also express our heartiest congratulations to the Secretary-General-designate, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea. We assure him that we will extend our full cooperation and support to him in the discharge of his mandate.

As I said at the beginning of my statement, the peoples of the United Nations are increasingly confronted with challenges that threaten global security and require collective efforts if we are to confront and resolve them. Multilateralism is the only way to effectively tackle such global challenges. I wish every success to the General Assembly at its current session as we seek to effectively attain significant advancement on issues of particular concern to developing countries, such as the follow-up to the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals, the prevention of armed conflict, agreement on an international convention against terrorism, the protection of the environment, the revitalization of the General Assembly, and the reform of the Security Council. We are confident that the present session will also provide an opportunity for us to assess the real impact made by the newly established Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council. We hope that the United Nations will continue to remain a beacon of hope, peace and prosperity for the peoples of the world.

I draw the attention of the Assembly to the report of the Secretary-General on the agenda item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations" (A/61/256 and Add.1). That excellent report clearly demonstrates that the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations is of particular importance with a view to achieving the common goals of peace, security, stability and development, advancing the rule of law and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

The complexity of global problems has turned the United Nations into a special setting for developing fruitful cooperative relationships with regional organizations. The United Nations is benefiting, and could benefit more, from the experience and capacity of regional organizations on issues of common interest. Such organizations could also contribute to managing issues at the regional and national levels. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations therefore needs to be enhanced, promoted and supported by States.

AALCO is a common platform and a forum for bringing together the Asian and African States with a view to strengthening their participation in the process of the development of international law and to enabling them to effectively realize their goals and aspirations. With a sense of pride and deep satisfaction, I am honoured to inform this body that AALCO is celebrating its golden jubilee this year. The organization, considered to be a tangible outcome of the historic 1955 Bandung Summit of Asian and African leaders, has promoted Afro-Asian solidarity, particularly on international law matters.

AALCO remains a unique body in terms of developing Asian-African perspectives on international law, but it also acts as a bridge between the world's two most populous continents. Our annual sessions, which are recognized and respected in international law circles, play an important role in facilitating the interaction of people, including eminent jurists, from the two continents, who deliberate on important issues of international law with the aim of reaching a common position on all of them.

The establishment of an equitable and just world order that serves the interests of the peoples of the world without discrimination, on the basis of sovereign equality among all States and respect for their independence and territorial integrity, is the raison d'être of international law. Issues concerning peace and security, human rights, international humanitarian law, accountability for international crimes, environmental

issues, equitable trading regimes, among others, are addressed by the international community through the progressive development and codification of international law.

In the 50 years of its existence, AALCO has taken part, directly or indirectly, in every major development in the field of international law, keeping in mind the specific interests of the developing countries; the membership of AALCO is testimony to that.

Our modest membership of seven in 1956 has grown in strength to 48 today, and we represent two thirds of the world's population. We are confident that the number of member States will continue to grow. With the full support and cooperation of its member States, the organization follows a dynamic work programme that has always been kept in tune with the needs of the time and is suitably oriented to meet the challenges posed in contemporary international society in general and the needs of an expanding membership, encompassing the two continents of Asia and Africa.

In this, the organization's golden jubilee year, a new era in its history has begun. The new building of the permanent headquarters of AALCO was inaugurated, in conjunction with our forty-fifth golden jubilee session, in New Delhi on 6 April 2006. Because of the magnanimity of our generous host — the Government of India — AALCO now, in its fiftieth year, has a permanent abode. The organization will very soon start functioning from its new premises, thus implementing a new series of activities with much broader scope.

AALCO's two most recent annual sessions, held, respectively, in Nairobi in 2005 and at our headquarters in New Delhi in 2006, were occasions for us to consider our agenda items in depth. They include the work of the International Law Commission; the Law of the Sea; international terrorism; establishing cooperation against trafficking in women and children; the International Criminal Court; human rights in Islam; the deportation of Palestinians and other Israeli practices, among them the massive immigration and settlement of Jews in all of the occupied territories in violation of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949; and, finally, expressions of folklore and its international protection. That listing is indicative of the wide range of topics in international law that AALCO considers, while preserving its ability to reorient its agenda to accord with the changing times.

A unique feature of our sessions is the special meetings organized by AALCO in collaboration with friendly international organizations on topics of contemporary relevance in international law. At Nairobi, the Kenyan Government, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and AALCO joined hands to organize a special meeting on environmental law and sustainable development, which addressed issues pertaining to the Asian-African perspective on international environmental law, compliance with and enforcement of environmental law and problems and prospects related to the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol.

At AALCO's Golden Jubilee meetings in New Delhi — a momentous occasion for our organization — we organized three such special meetings, one on legal identity and statelessness, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); a second on universal jurisdiction and its role in the enforcement of international humanitarian law, organized jointly with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and a third on international migration law, in association with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Those meetings were highly successful and featured extensive exchanges of ideas between the subject experts and delegates. I take this opportunity to thank our partners in those endeavours — UNEP, UNHCR, ICRC and IOM — for their valuable help and cooperation in making the meetings a success.

Intersessional activities also continue to represent an important part of the AALCO work programme. One such event was the May 2006 Kuala Lumpur Meeting of International Experts on Human Rights in Islam, organized by the Governments of Malaysia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the AALCO secretariat. The main theme of the Meeting was understanding human rights as enshrined in Islam. The Meeting highlighted, among other things, the fundamental principles of human rights as set out in Islam in order to examine how the concept of human rights has been adopted and integrated into national laws and practices. A galaxy of experts from around the world attended and presented their views during the Conference.

AALCO has consistently sought to develop a synergy with the United Nations, given the two organizations' common objectives, complementary mandates and respective comparative advantages. It has been supportive of the United Nations, and its work has been aimed at rendering assistance to AALCO member Governments in their consideration of the agenda items before the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly. The preparation of extensive studies to assist AALCO member Governments' participation in international legal conferences convoked under the auspices of the United Nations, and on selected items on the agenda of the General Assembly, is part and parcel of the regular activities of the AALCO secretariat.

AALCO makes an important contribution towards bringing together the countries of Asia and Africa, with a view to effectively coordinating the position of developing countries in codification conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations. It especially contributed during the negotiations leading to the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and in the establishment of the International Criminal Court — all of which have been well recognized and appreciated.

In acknowledgement of its role, the conferral of permanent observer status to AALCO by the United Nations General Assembly was a turning point in the history of the organization. The inclusion of certain items and topics under consideration by the United Nations in the work programme of AALCO reflects its contribution to the fulfilment of the purposes and the principles of the United Nations.

AALCO and the International Law Commission (ILC) share a mutually supportive relationship. The follow-up of the work of the ILC is our statutory obligation and hence is regularly supported by in-depth secretariat studies on the item. Substantive deliberations on the topic also take place at our annual sessions. The ILC Chairman or his representative addresses our annual sessions and explains the progress of work achieved in the Commission. Subsequently, I will present before the Commission the crux of the statements made by AALCO member States at the AALCO annual session.

The relationship between our two organizations has been further strengthened by the convening of joint AALCO-ILC meetings in conjunction with the meetings of AALCO legal advisers, which take place each year on the sidelines of the annual General Assembly sessions.

It has been my constant endeavour to strengthen the relationship between AALCO and other intergovernmental organizations. Our organization has concluded formal agreements with a number of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Maritime Organization, IOM, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, UNHCR, UNEP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

We value our relationship with the United Nations family of organizations and shall continue to strive to fortify that cooperation towards the strengthening of the international legal order. In that context, it is worth mentioning that AALCO has initiated dialogue with several specialized agencies to conduct training programmes and workshops in several areas of international law. Successful attainment of this objective would help in building the capacity of international law, particularly with regard to Asian and African States.

The scourge of international terrorism continues to plague us. It is a stark reality of our times that no part of the world is immune from the horrendous acts of terror perpetrated on innocent civilians by terrorists. That horrible crime affects the world's peace and prosperity and hampers the development process. Addressing the phenomenon of terrorism is a complex and challenging task. Terrorist activities by any individuals, groups, non-State entities or States must be checked by all possible means. In that regard, we welcome the recent adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) by the General Assembly. Although the Strategy is an important step ahead, we look forward to working diligently with our member States in order to encourage further momentum on the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism that is being discussed by United Nations Member States, which, when adopted, will reflect the views of the entire international community.

Before concluding, allow me to thank all delegations that spoke today about AALCO and its activities and in support of the cooperation between the United Nations and AALCO. I would mention in particular the host of AALCO — the Republic of India — and China, Japan and Egypt.

As the head of an international legal body, I would like to conclude by stressing in particular the importance of the full respect for and enhancement and implementation of the rule of law in all areas, in order to keep our international community within the boundaries of a civilized world where only justice, equality and one standard criterion prevail. Only then can we expect a significant reduction in the many evils around us.

The Acting President: Before I call on the next speaker, I would plead with speakers to be economical with time, because we have a number of draft resolutions to go through this evening.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/6 of 17 October 1989, I now call on the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Davis (Council of Europe): The previous speaker, on behalf of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, told us that he was speaking for 48 Member States. As Secretary General of the Council of Europe, I can only speak for 46 Member States, but they do represent almost the whole of Europe. And on their behalf, as many previous speakers have done, I want to begin by paying tribute to the outgoing Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, for the past 10 years, has spared no effort in grappling with the most intractable problems facing our planet.

At the Council of Europe, we look forward to working with his successor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the agenda of our future cooperation is to be spelled out in a draft resolution to be submitted to this General Assembly.

The Council of Europe will continue to contribute to the global effort in protecting human rights; campaigning against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance; protecting persons belonging to minorities; preventing torture and inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment; fighting against trafficking in human beings; combating violence against women; and protecting the rights of the child.

For the Council of Europe, all those issues are priorities, but the challenge which tops the list is the fight against terrorism. In that area, cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations already exists, but I believe that it should be reinforced.

Let us be clear. At the Council of Europe, we despise terrorists because they are criminals and because they try to destroy everything we stand for and everything we believe in. The Council of Europe is best known for its work on the protection of human rights — and with reason. Our campaigns, our standard-setting activities, our monitoring mechanisms based on independent expertise and peer pressure, and especially the European Convention on Human Rights, which is enforced through the European Court of Human Rights, mean that our organization is the reference point when it comes to the protection of human rights in Europe.

But the Council of Europe is not only about human rights. When it comes to the fight against terrorism, the Council of Europe has adopted conventions allowing our member States to improve their cooperation and diminish the capacity of terrorists to enlist new recruits and to strike whenever and wherever they choose.

Those new treaties establish as criminal offences several acts which may lead to acts of terrorism, such as incitement, recruitment and training. They also reinforce cooperation in the prevention of terrorism by modifying existing arrangements for extradition and mutual assistance. Our activities to strengthen cooperation in law enforcement and to help the victims of terrorism are not in contradiction with our insistence on respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In Europe, we reject the false choice between freedom and security. That is not some idealistic delusion, but the result of a long and tragic experience with terrorism on European soil. The so-called troubles in Northern Ireland — to give only one example — lasted for a quarter of a century, during which more than 3,500 people were killed. Germany had Baader Meinhof, Italy had the Red Brigades, Spain has had Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, and both the Russian Federation and Turkey continue to be targets for terrorists.

We have learned our lessons the hard way, and we use that experience in responding to the threat from Al-Qaida. Experience tells us that giving up on human rights and justice is not only wrong, but also dangerous.

The President of the United States of America recently said that the fight against terrorism is the defining ideological conflict of the twenty-first century. But an ideological conflict cannot be won by force alone. If we want to defeat terrorists, we must remain faithful to our ideas and values. People around the world must know that we are right and that terrorists are wrong — that we are just and that they are criminals.

We cannot win an ideological conflict with secret prisons, or with people being kept in a legal limbo and deprived of safeguards which are the foundation of our systems of justice and of our democracies. Those methods are not only morally wrong; they are dangerous because they are exactly what terrorists want. They want us to give up the most fundamental, defining features of our freedom. They want to level the field between good and evil. They want to set a wrong against a wrong.

We cannot let that happen, we must not let that happen and we will not let it happen. In Europe, we are not only resolved to fight terrorists; we are determined to defeat them. And have no doubt — we will.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/5 of 8 October 1999, I now call on the Secretary General of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

Mr. Chrysanthopoulos (Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization): Since this is the first time that I have taken the floor, allow me at the outset to congratulate Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa upon her election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

The foundations of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) were laid down in 1992 as a political initiative for economic cooperation in the wake of tremendous changes that had taken place in the world. Upon the ratification of its charter on 1 May 1999, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization was born with a legal identity on the international scene.

It was a period following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the founding fathers of BSEC wanted to create an organization that could promote peace and stability in the Black Sea region through prosperity. And that actually happened. The organization was able to effectively promote peace and stability in the area through closer cooperation among its member States. In the margins of ministerial meetings, ministers of countries not maintaining diplomatic relations among themselves could meet and discuss the bilateral problems that separated them. The essence is that peace and stability have been maintained in the region for the past 14 years and BSEC has played an important role towards that end.

In those 14 years, BSEC has become a forum for discussion and cooperation in areas ranging from energy to transport, trade and economic development, the environment, tourism, agriculture, combating organized crime, terrorism, small and medium-sized enterprises, emergency relief, and the elimination of the consequences of natural and human-made disasters. Recently we added culture as an additional area of our cooperation. Furthermore, BSEC has built a permanent and extensive institutional framework of cooperation that covers all levels of governance. On the intergovernmental level, the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs is the highest decision-making organ. At the parliamentary level is the BSEC Parliamentary Assembly, or PABSEC. In the financial sector there is BSTDB, the trade and development bank of BSEC, and the BSEC Business Council. Finally, we have the International Centre for Black Sea Studies, which is BSEC's think tank.

BSEC has also elaborated binding agreements and common action plans on key issues of regional cooperation. Examples include the Agreement on Combating Organized Crime and its protocols, and the Agreements on Cooperation in Emergency Situations, both signed in 1998. The establishment of the Project Development Fund in October 2002 was another important development. Its purpose is to facilitate the elaboration and promotion of projects with high regional cooperation and development impact in the BSEC region at the early stages of their conception. Contributions from outside donors are welcome, provided that their sources are transparent and the conditions attached to them are consistent with the principles and objectives of the BSEC organization.

BSEC has at last reached the point where it is in the process of starting the implementation of regional projects of great importance for the Black Sea region. The Ministers of Transport of BSEC, at their historic meeting in Sochi last month, agreed to go ahead with the construction of a ring highway around the Black Sea. It is a major 7,000-kilometre project called the Road of the Argonauts, which will change the life of the people of the BSEC countries by bringing further economic development to the region through facilitating the overland transport of goods within BSEC and from Europe to Asia and vice versa, and tourism. The second project agreed in Sochi was the Motorways of the Sea of the BSEC region. It will make the Black Sea smaller by creating the necessary infrastructure for better connecting the Black Sea ports and the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and Caspian Seas.

Another area of our attention concerns the relations between BSEC and the European Union. With the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union next year, the latter will have at last reached the Black Sea. Consequently, there is a need to enhance relations between BSEC and the European Union and to develop an enhanced framework of cooperation with Brussels. The issue was discussed on 14 September at the meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the European Union, and we remain confident that we will soon have concrete results.

In June next year, BSEC will be celebrating its fifteenth anniversary, and Turkey, which will be chairing the organization at that time, will host a summit that will endorse serious and significant documents concerning reform aspects of BSEC. We are confident that after that summit, BSEC will emerge stronger, more efficient and project oriented.

At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly, by its resolution 54/5 of 8 October 1999, granted observer status to the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, a landmark development that enabled BSEC to take its place in the family of international organizations. Assembly resolution 55/211 of 20 December 2000 opened up new avenues for BSEC to develop cooperation or working relationships with other organizations within the United Nations system and beyond. BSEC has signed cooperation agreements with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. BSEC has also developed cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and the World Bank. We have also begun to cooperate closely with the United Nations Development Programme, with which we are working on a common project concerning cross-border cooperation within the Black Sea region.

Allow me to go back to BSEC-ECE cooperation and underline that cooperation in the transport field has increased through application of ECE experience in facilitating international transport processes to the BSEC region. We are in contact with the ECE to receive its expertise on the construction of the Black Sea ring highway decided at Sochi.

At this point I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his factual report on the status of cooperative relationship between BSEC and various United Nations organizations during the 2005-2006 period. We appreciate his recommendation that the United Nations, the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system should continue to hold consultations with BSEC and formulate and implement joint programmes pertaining to fields of common interest.

We followed with great interest the Security Council debate on 20 September on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations and other intergovernmental bodies in maintaining peace and security (see S/PV.5529). We also read with great interest the text of the presidential statement issued on this matter (S/PRST/2006/39). As a regional economic organization, BSEC is not directly involved in peacekeeping and conflict prevention. However, it renders its contribution to peace and security through economic cooperation and by means of implementing the so-called soft security measures. And within that framework, we are willing to cooperate closely with the United Nations Secretary-General and with other competent United Nations bodies.

Before concluding, I wish to pay tribute to the Russian Federation, the current Chairman-in-Office of BSEC, for introducing the draft resolution that is now before the General Assembly. I wish also to thank the other sponsors. I appeal to the members of this Assembly to adopt the text by consensus. The draft resolution will give a new impetus to BSEC's

cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the pursuit of the objectives and principles enshrined in the Charter, as well as those of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. BSEC will continue to play its role with determination in efforts to strengthen multilateral cooperation to meet the global challenges of this millennium.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 477 (V) of 1 November 1950, I now call on the observer for the League of Arab States.

Mr. Mahmassani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me begin by congratulating the President of the Assembly on her election to preside over the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. I take this opportunity to express our congratulations to the President of the sixtieth session on his wise and skilful conduct of that session. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report submitted to the Assembly at this session on the close and multidisciplinary cooperation between the United Nations and the Arab League in confronting the challenges and dangers that bedevil international peace and security.

The League of Arab States and its specialized agencies wish to continue and intensify cooperation with the United Nations in all fields, as emphasized by the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/256). During the 2004-2006 period, cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations covered all areas, including participation in the sixth high-level meeting between the United Nations and regional and intergovernmental organizations, held in New York in July 2005. A standing committee, based on a proposal by the Secretary-General of the Arab League, was created. In addition, the United Nations and the Arab League co-chaired the sectoral meeting on the implementation and financing of the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development, held in Cairo in November 2005.

The Arab League and the United Nations also co-chaired the ninth meeting on cooperation between the secretariats of the two organizations, held in Vienna in April 2006, at which time the participants assessed the cooperative activities that had taken place since the eighth meeting. They decided to consider the organization in 2007 of several training sessions in connection with election monitoring, conflict prevention and resolution, demobilization and reintegration programmes for former combatants and the establishment of a regional database in the Arab States on small arms and light weapons.

Participants also considered the organization of a joint meeting of relevant United Nations agencies and bodies to help the League of Arab States establish an early-warning system in the context of the Security Council and the Arab League's concept of peace, so that they could benefit from United Nations experience in preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution and discuss ways and means to allow the League of Arab States to draw on the technical expertise of the United Nations in building an Arab peace infrastructure in the context of cooperation with the Security Council.

The participants at the ninth meeting also stressed the need to build a culture of dialogue among civilizations and strengthen relations between them in order to bring different civilizations together and to preserve and safeguard the values of human dignity and peaceful coexistence. With regard to the importance of ensuring respect for religious belief and religious sites, the meeting paid special attention to the joint communiqué issued in Doha by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Qatar and of Turkey.

In November 2005, a preparatory meeting took place in Cairo with the participation of the United Nations and the Arab League on Iraqi national reconciliation, as well as participation in supervising the 2006 presidential elections in the Comoros. The Arab League and the United Nations also witnessed the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Movement. The League and the United Nations are also cooperating in helping the people of Somalia to achieve comprehensive national reconciliation. We are cooperating with the United Nations Development Programme on the partnership designed to develop animal resources in Somalia.

The World Health Organization is also involved in Somalia in the area of health, and the Arab League has been cooperating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in formulating the Arab Charter on Human Rights. It has also set up workshops, in cooperation with the United

Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, and has signed a memorandum of understanding with other organizations for an exchange of assistance at the national and regional levels regarding the role and participation of women in development. The League of Arab States and ESCWA will continue to follow up on the recommendations and initiatives that resulted from the Arab International Forum on Rehabilitation and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the context of the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

The efforts made by the Arab League to enhance full cooperation with the United Nations in all spheres demonstrate that the League wants to work together with the United Nations to ensure the implementation of all the resolutions adopted by this Organization, whether they relate to disarmament, counter-terrorism or the peaceful settlement of disputes.

One of the main priorities of the Arab League is the quest for a just and lasting resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict in accordance with international law, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as the enhancing of cooperation between the two organizations, which can help us to confront international threats and challenges and to establish international peace and security. This would include freeing the Middle East from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in accordance with international law. This desire for cooperation with the United Nations is rooted in the Arab character, which believes in tolerance and peaceful coexistence with others through a dialogue among civilizations.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. Anders Johnson.

Mr. Johnson (Inter-Parliamentary Union): The Assembly has before it the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (A/61/256, part three). I think that members will agree that the report attests to a dynamic and substantive partnership between the two organizations. These developments would not have been possible without the vision of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We congratulate him for his remarkable achievements here at the United Nations.

Last year, leaders of parliaments from all over the world met here at United Nations Headquarters to declare their support for a strong and effective United Nations. They pledged to assist in implementing decisions taken at the United Nations by ratifying international instruments, translating those commitments into national legislation, approving the budgets and exercising oversight of the executive. They also stated their wish to make the United Nations accountable to the people it serves throughout the world.

The terms of the Declaration of the World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments are echoed in the World Summit Outcome, which calls for strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and national and regional parliaments, in particular through the IPU, with a view to furthering all aspects of the Millennium Declaration and promoting United Nations reform. These points are taken up in the Secretary-General's report, and the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU echoes some of the key suggestions made in that report.

The Secretary-General welcomes the annual parliamentary hearing held at the United Nations and other specialized parliamentary meetings at major United Nations conferences, and calls for such joint United Nations-IPU events to be developed further. In fact, we are doing that already. At the 2006 parliamentary hearing that we will be holding here in a few weeks time, we will look at conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and the parliamentarians will examine the Secretary-General's major report on the subject.

Over the past year, the IPU has held a series of specialized parliamentary meetings at the United Nations designed to raise awareness among lawmakers and encourage a more coherent parliamentary contribution to some major global problems. The meetings have focused on innovative forms of financing for development, women's participation in politics, national strategies to combat HIV/AIDS and governance in the least developed countries.

We have begun consultations with the Office of the President of the General Assembly, various United Nations departments and representatives of the United

Nations membership in order to pinpoint areas for future parliamentary action. I should add that we believe that a more coherent system of consultation between the United Nations and the IPU needs to be developed.

The Secretary-General concurs with that view. In his report, he invites the two organizations to consider a permanent mechanism for consultation and coordination. He goes on to suggest that ways could be explored to involve the IPU more systematically in system-wide strategies for consideration by the United Nations system and the Chief Executives Board.

The IPU is anxious to give practical shape to these recommendations. During the recent discussion here on the revitalization of the General Assembly, the IPU proposed to put the annual parliamentary hearing on the agenda of the General Assembly itself. The hearing could thus serve as a political sounding board for the General Assembly on some of the larger issues on its own agenda. At the same time, it would expose members of parliament to the work of the General Assembly and enlist their support in implementing Assembly decisions.

A few weeks ago, the IPU addressed the United Nations High-Level Committee on Programmes on the question of stronger cooperation between the United Nations system and national parliaments. I draw the attention of members to the concept note prepared by the IPU for that meeting.

We are ready to find ways to ensure parliamentary support for some of the major cross-cutting issues, such as health, employment, environmental protection, migration, violence against children, the rights of persons with disabilities and gender mainstreaming.

At the operational level, the IPU has scaled up its work in a number of areas: providing specialized knowledge on parliaments and their mandate, structure and working methods; setting standards and developing best practices for parliamentary democracy and free and fair elections; providing technical support to parliaments, including through a global centre for information and communication technology in parliament, recently launched with the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs; promoting dialogue and reconciliation on the basis of the unique track record of the IPU in facilitating political dialogue between adversaries through parliamentary diplomacy; offering support to parliaments in the areas of human rights and respect for international human rights instruments; and promoting gender equality and partnership between men and women in politics.

As the IPU develops such programmes it also seeks to strengthen its cooperation with the new United Nations bodies. The IPU has developed a close working relationship with the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), and earlier this week the two organizations signed a cooperation agreement. Two projects submitted by the IPU — one concerning work by national parliaments in Africa in enforcing international human rights conventions, and the other in support of women's political participation in Burundi — have been approved for UNDEF funding and will be entering the implementation phase in the coming weeks.

The IPU is also working with the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. Last week, we participated in the Peacebuilding Commission session on Burundi, in which the IPU put forward a series of proposals for action in the field of good governance.

Last but not least, the IPU is looking forward to developing a close working relationship with the new Human Rights Council. This will build on our past work with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which has included the publication of a series of guides for parliamentarians on international human rights standards and the convening of round tables and seminars for parliamentarians on prominent human rights issues. A handbook dedicated to the new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is currently in the making.

We have before us a unique opportunity to forge a truly strategic partnership between the United Nations and the IPU in pursuit of world peace, security, development and democratic progress. The IPU is ready to take on this challenge, and we know that in order to succeed we will need the committed assistance of all members.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Mission of Italy for having introduced draft resolution A/61/L.6, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as well as the many countries that are sponsoring the draft resolution. On behalf of

the IPU, I urge all members to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now call on the observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Wahab (Organization of the Islamic Conference): The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) would like to express its sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the report on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations, as contained in document A/61/256 and Add.1.

As the second-largest intergovernmental organization, after the United Nations, the OIC represents 57 member States. It is a diverse group of nations in all respects — economically, politically and culturally. The significant demographic strength and resource potential of OIC member States has led to a pronounced new orientation at the OIC, as reflected in the 10-year programme of action adopted at the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Summit in December last year. The 10-year programme of action assesses the most prominent challenges facing the Muslim world today and outlines pragmatic and objective strategies to address them effectively. It responds to the need to cooperate decisively and to take the necessary initiatives to face the grave political, socio-economic, cultural and scientific challenges of the Muslim world and to effectively deal with their implications for its unity, peace, security and development.

In that regard, the OIC is devising programmes to increase its capacity in diverse areas such as peacebuilding, the promotion of human rights, good governance, accountability and transparency. Poverty alleviation and the socio-economic development of the least developed countries, especially in Africa, as well as the education and scientific and technological development of the member States, also remain high-priority areas for the OIC.

As reflected in the draft resolution, which has been circulated to all Member States and to which the Chairman of the OIC group referred this morning, the Secretary-General of the OIC has taken a broader and more active role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding, and has been involved in peace efforts in various parts of the world, particularly those involving the States members of the OIC.

The OIC, however, is not trying to address all of these challenges alone; it has willing partners, including the United Nations and its specialized agencies, civil society and other regional organizations.

We are happy to note that cooperation between the OIC and the United Nations is increasing, while direct contacts occur frequently between the two secretaries-general on matters of mutual interest. The desire of both organizations is to continue to cooperate closely in the political, economic, social, humanitarian, cultural and scientific fields to find solutions to global problems.

On behalf of the OIC and its specialized institutions, I would like to reassure the General Assembly that the OIC remains dedicated to the joint tasks that our two organizations are pursuing.

One important area of collaboration between our two bodies is taking place in the area of humanitarian work. Immediately after the tsunami disaster and the devastating earthquakes in Asia, the OIC contributed significantly to the work of relief efforts in the region. The OIC has worked closely with other intergovernmental organizations to help to end famine in Somalia and Niger. It collaborated with UNICEF to organize the first ministerial-level conference on the rights of the child, which was held in Morocco in November 2005. Next month, the OIC is convening the first-ever conference on the role of women in development, to which all relevant agencies of the United Nations system have been invited; we hope that they will be able to participate.

In July this year, the OIC signed a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that focuses on cooperation in the areas of information-sharing; building regional, subregional and national capacities for the adoption of policies and guidelines on human rights; and encouraging the ratification of human rights treaties.

I would like to conclude my statement by expressing the hope and expectation that cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC will be swiftly enhanced in all areas of common concern, values and ideals. While we can leave it to history to pronounce its judgement on the outcome of our joint

efforts, the challenges of our time place heavy burdens and common responsibilities on the shoulders of both organizations. In assuming those responsibilities, the OIC looks forward to closer cooperation and further strengthened interaction with all agencies of the United Nations system.

Mr. Onischenko (Ukraine): The delegation of the Ukraine would like to make a statement as the Chair of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

The past few weeks have been marked by unprecedented challenges to global non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament efforts, as well as to international peace and security. The announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of a nuclear test conducted on 9 October drew a universal outcry and prompted international bodies and world leaders to express their strongest protest.

The unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1718 (2006) sent a resolute message to the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and reconfirmed the determination of the international community to halt the process of the increasing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. That development also represented a tough challenge for the CTBTO Preparatory Commission as an accredited international body in the field and for its monitoring and verification machinery. Ukraine is proud of the fact that the Commission and the Provisional Technical Secretariat were the first among international bodies to take prompt action in response to the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

I wish to recall in that connection that on 6 and 9 October both the Chairperson of the Preparatory Commission and the Executive Secretary issued statements containing strong messages to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea concerning its actions. Let me reiterate the calls in those statements for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea not to engage in any nuclear testing and to exercise every restraint in the future, in order to avoid steps that would have major international repercussions, as well as the call on all States for maximum restraint and for continuing a moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions and other nuclear explosions.

At the subsequent open-ended meeting of the Bureau of the Preparatory Commission, which was convened on 9 October, just a few hours after the announcement, delegations expressed profound concern with regard to the course of action taken by Pyongyang.

Later, at a special meeting of the Commission on 13 October, delegations expressed appreciation for the quality of the information issued by the Provisional Technical Secretariat following the explosion, as well as for its rapid dissemination, and commended it for the technical organizational success that enabled it to quickly make reliable data concerning the event available to the State signatories and to the international community. We also wish to join other States in praising the efforts of the Provisional Technical Secretariat and offer our full appreciation and support to the Executive Secretary, Tibor Tóth, and welcome his report to the Assembly today.

Recent events have directed the renewed and increased attention of the world community to the role of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) — a role that is difficult to overestimate with regard to the issue of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation. This issue remains one of the most important challenges facing humankind today.

My country has also made a crucial contribution towards achieving the goal of the CTBT. It has been more than a decade since Ukraine renounced its nuclear arsenal — the third largest nuclear arsenal at the time. Also, we were among the very first nations to sign and ratify the CTBT and to implement fully our obligations and commitments under the global non-proliferation regime.

Ukraine also feels a special responsibility in that respect. In its capacity as the coordinator of the efforts of the Eastern European States to foster the ratification of the CTBT, my country has steadfastly supported the efforts by its partners and the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO to promote the Treaty. In that regard, we welcome the recent ratification of the Treaty by new States parties and call upon other States to follow suit.

Ukraine also applauds the steps taken to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially the recent progress to establish such a zone in Central Asia. We recognize the efforts to promote and create such a zone in the Middle East and are in favour of achieving a verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

By chairing the Preparatory Commission this year, Ukraine continues to work on an enhanced verification system, which remains at the core of the CTBT. Ukraine is encouraged by the efforts of the CTBTO to establish the Treaty's verification machinery. Substantial progress has been made in building up the system during the past year.

In addition to its primary goals, the CTBT verification system can bring other civilian benefits, in particular through the establishment of a tsunami warning system. That achievement, along with the scientific and civilian gains resulting from the operations of the CTBT, helps to convince those States that continue to hesitate to join the Treaty. In that respect, my delegation appreciates the outreach activities of the Executive Secretary and encourages the Provisional Technical Secretariat to continue its relevant efforts. Ukraine, as the Chair of the Preparatory Commission, will shortly introduce a draft resolution on that agenda sub-item.

My delegation is confident that the operational and effective monitoring and verification system will provide a credible way to ensure Treaty compliance. We are committed to making a strong contribution towards that objective, including through hosting of an international monitoring system station in Ukraine.

Just one month ago, Ukraine joined the ministerial statement that was adopted at the meeting held in New York on 20 September, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Treaty's opening for signature. We wish to reaffirm here our adherence to the commitments contained in that document.

My country, whose role in nuclear disarmament can serve as an example, remains among the strongest and most consistent supporters of the standard international instrument in the field. Ukraine reaffirms its determination to further contribute to the efforts to achieve the goals stipulated by the Treaty.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. Before we proceed further, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to proceeding to consider draft resolutions A/61/L.6, as orally revised, and A/61/L.7, at the present meeting.

In this connection, since the two draft resolutions were only circulated earlier today, it will be necessary to waive the relevant provisions of rule 78 of the rules of procedure. The relevant provision of rule 78 reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting".

Unless I hear any objections, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees with the proposal to waive that provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/61/L.4, A/61/L.5, A/61/L.6, as orally revised, and A/61/L.7.

Draft resolution A/61/L.4 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Corporation Organizations". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/61/L.4: Austria, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.4?

Draft resolution A/61/L.4 was adopted (resolution 61/4).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/61/L.5 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/61/L.5: the Central African Republic, Madagascar, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.5?

Draft resolution A/61/L.5 was adopted (resolution 61/5).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/61/L.6, as orally revised, is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/61/L.6: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia,

Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Georgia, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malawi, Mexico, the Federated States of Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nauru, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Yemen and Zambia.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.6, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/61/L.6, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 61/6).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/61/L.7 is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/61/L.7: Austria, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Mauritius, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Thailand, Togo and Ukraine.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.7?

Draft resolution A/61/L.7 was adopted (resolution 61/7).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-items (b), (d), (j) and (k) of agenda item 108?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 108.

Before adjourning the meeting, I wish to inform members that draft resolutions under other sub-items of agenda item 108 will be submitted at a later date.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.